


PARADISE

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Chapter 1

N APPROACHING THIS SUBJECT I seem to be possessed by an unusual eagerness in my quest to clarify the facts about Paradise, its place, and its nature to those who are desirous of this knowledge. This is all the more remarkable since the Apostle did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body, yet he says that he 'was caught up to the third heaven.'¹ And again he says: 'I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—that he was caught up into paradise and heard secret words that man may not repeat. Of such a man I will boast; but of myself I will glory in nothing save in my infirmities. For if I do wish to boast, I shall not be foolish; for I am speaking the truth.'² If Paradise, then, is of such a nature that Paul alone, or one like Paul, could scarcely see it while alive, and still was unable to remember whether he saw it in the body or out of the body, and, moreover, heard words that he was forbidden

¹ 2 Cor. 12.2.

² 2 Cor. 12.3-6.

to reveal—if this be true, how will be it possible for us to declare the position of Paradise which we have not been able to see and, even if we had succeeded in seeing it, we would be forbidden to share this information with others? And, again, since Paul shrank from exalting himself by reason of the sublimity of the revelation, how much more ought we to strive not to be too anxious to disclose that which leads to danger by its very revelation! The subject of Paradise should not, therefore, be treated lightly. With these words let us set aside the question of what was hidden to Paul.

(2) Nevertheless, we can find out who was the Creator of this Paradise. We read in Genesis that God planted a garden to the east and he put there the man he had formed.³ Who had the power to create Paradise, if not almighty God, who ‘spoke and they were made’⁴ and who was never in want of the thing which He wished to bring into being? He planted, therefore, that Paradise of which He says in His wisdom: ‘Every plant which my Father has not planted will be rooted up.’⁵ This is a goodly plantation for angels and saints. The saints are said to lie beneath the fig tree and the vine.⁶ In this respect they are the type of the angels⁷ in that time of peace which is to come.

(3) Hence, Paradise has many trees that are fruit-bearing, with plenty of sap, and vigor. Of these it is said: ‘All the trees of the woods shall rejoice.’⁸ The woods flourish ever with the green shoots of merit, just like that ‘tree which is planted near the running waters, whose leaf shall not fall off,’⁹ because its fruit is plenteous. Here, then, is Paradise.

3 Gen. 2.8.

4 Ps. 32.9.

5 Matt. 15.13.

6 Mich. 6.6.

7 Cf. Mark 12.25.

8 Ps. 95.12.

9 Ps. 1.3.

(4) The place where it is planted is called delight; wherefore holy David says: 'Thou shalt not make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure,'¹⁰ for you have read that 'a river rose in Eden watering the garden.'¹¹ These woods, therefore, which were planted in Paradise are watered by the outpouring of the waters of that spirit concerning which He says elsewhere: 'The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful.'¹² Here is that city of Jerusalem which above is free,¹³ in which the different merits of the saints come to fruition.

(5) In this garden, therefore, God put the man He had formed. Take note that He placed man there not in respect to the image of God, but in respect to the body of man. The incorporeal does not exist in a place. He placed man in Paradise, just as He placed the sun in heaven, awaiting lordship over the heavens, just as the creature expects the revelation of the sons of God.¹⁴

(6) Hence, if Paradise is a place where shrubs have opportunity to blossom, then Paradise has a certain vital force which receives and multiplies seeds in which each and every virtue is planted, and where flourishes the tree of life which is called Wisdom. Of this, Solomon says that Wisdom arose not of the earth but of the Father: 'For she is the brightness of eternal light' and 'the emanation of the glory of the almighty God.'¹⁵

10 Ps. 35.9.

11 Gen. 2.10.

12 Ps. 45.5.

13 Cf. Gal. 4.26.

14 Cf. Rom. 8.9.

15 Wisd. 7.25,26.

Chapter 2

(7) There was a tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Paradise. This was so because 'God made to grow a tree pleasant to sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.'¹ We shall see later whether this tree, like the others, was pleasant to sight and good for food. The question will be more fittingly discussed at the point where, on tasting the fruit of this tree, we find that man was deceived. Meantime, we should now reproach ourselves for not being able to know precisely the reasons behind these facts. We should not form a hasty judgment in respect to this product of creation, if it presents to our intellect what seems to us—like the creation of serpents and certain poisonous creatures—difficult and incomprehensible. In fact, we are unable, owing to human weakness, yet to know and understand the reason for the creation of each and every object. Let us, therefore, not criticise in holy Scripture something which we cannot comprehend. There are very many things which must not be subjected to the judgment of our intellect. Rather, these should be surveyed from the lofty heights of Divine Providence and from the intentions of God Himself.

(8) Without prejudice, then, to what we shall say hereafter, set it down as a first principle that the subject of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil is to you a displeasing one. After men had tasted of this tree, they realized that they were naked.² Nevertheless, I will state for your benefit that as a consummation of God's creation this tree grew in Paradise and that it was permitted by God, in order that we might be able to know the pre-eminence of good. How could we learn to know that there was a difference between good

1 Gen. 2.9.

2 Cf. Gen. 3.7.

and evil, if there existed no knowledge of good and evil? We could not have come to realize that evil was evil, unless there was knowledge of good, and that there could not be knowledge of good, unless there was actual good. Again, we could not have know what in itself was good, unless there was knowledge of evil. Take an example from the nature of the human body. There exists as a matter of fact a certain bitter and poisonous substance which has been discovered to have a general salutary effect on the health of men. Hence, what we regard as evil frequently turns out to be not in every respect evil, but to be advantageous for general use. Just as poison exists in a part of the body but has a beneficial effect on the body as a whole, so God established the knowledge in part of what is good and evil, in order that the whole might be benefitted.

(9) Hence it follows that the serpent in Paradise was certainly not brought into being without the will of God. In the figure of the serpent we see the Devil. That the Devil existed even in Paradise we are informed by the Prophet Ezechiel, who in discussing the Prince of Tyre says: 'Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God.'³ We maintain that the Prince of Tyre stands for the Devil. Shall we, therefore, accuse God because we cannot comprehend the treasures—with the exception of those which He has deigned to reveal—of His majesty and wisdom which lie hidden and concealed in Christ? Yet He did reveal to us the fact that the wickedness of the Devil is fruitful for man's salvation. This would not be the Devil's intention, but the Lord makes the wickedness of him who stands in opposition to us contribute something to our salvation. The wickedness of the Devil has caused the virtue and patience of one holy man to shine in a clearer light. The justice of Job was so disciplined and

³ Ezech. 28.13.

exercised by the wickedness of his opponent that eventually he gained the crown of victory over his adversary, the Devil. No one is crowned 'unless he has competed according to the rules.'⁴ Joseph's chastity, too, would never have been recorded for us, if it did not happen that a woman, the wife of his master and friend, incited and goaded by the Devil's allurements, had not played with his affections.⁵ This woman finally endeavored to bring about his death. This event added more to the fame of a man who by his continence faced death in defense of chastity. Do you desire to know God's plan? Here is an instance. Through the instrumentality of the Devil there was once an occasion when a just man prepared to perpetrate manslaughter. The situation was one that involved the murder of one's own son. Yet, for all that, the Lord tempted Abraham in this wise. He demanded that Abraham sacrifice his son to Him. By reason of this temptation he was able to prove himself faithful to the Lord, since compliance to his vow and not pity for his beloved son brought about repeal of the order.⁶ There was, therefore, in Paradise a tree of knowledge of good and evil which appeared to the eye to be beautiful and to the taste to be edible. It was not actually good to eat, for its fruit appeared to have a harmful effect on man. What is injurious to individuals may nevertheless have a beneficial effect on men as a whole. The Devil, for example, did harm to Judas,⁷ but he bestowed the wreath of victory on all the other Apostles, inasmuch as they were able to face and overcome the force of his temptation.

(10) Accordingly, let it not be a subject of reprehension or doubt that the Devil existed in Paradise. As a matter of

⁴ 2 Tim. 2.5.

⁵ Cf. Gen. 39.17.

⁶ Cf. Gen. 22.1.

⁷ Cf. Luke 22.3.

fact he was powerless to bar from the saints the way of their ascent. As one who had the right of possession, he did not evict the just from their habitation. It may be that he turned away from the occupancy of that high estate some who were in fact slothful and vicious. There is a recorded event that arouses to a much greater degree our regard and our admiration. This is the fact that the Devil was excluded from the prayers of the saints as the result of an event which was to take place: 'I was watching Satan fall as lightning from heaven.'⁸ Let us, therefore, not fear one who is so weak that he is destined to fall from heaven. He actually received the power to tempt us but not the competency to subvert us, except when our weak and unassisted will falters because it is powerless to summon aid. For that reason we need to know what was the nature of the deceit inflicted on the first man. We ought to know, too, the method and manner of the Devil's procedure and what in man he thought was subject to temptation, so that we, in knowing this, may proceed to take precautions.

(11) Many people nevertheless are of the opinion that the Devil was not in Paradise, although we read that he stood with the angels in heaven.⁹ These persons interpret the statement of Scripture according to their own fancy. In this way they put aside any objection which they may have to the words of Scripture. We stand by the conviction held by one who preceded us that sin was committed by man because of the pleasure of sense. We maintain that the figure of the serpent stands for enjoyment and the figure of the woman for the emotions of the mind and heart. The latter is called by the Greeks αἰσθησις. When according to this theory, the senses are deceived, the mind, which the Greeks call νοῦς, falls into error. Hence, not without reason

⁸ Luke 10.18.

⁹ Cf. Zach. 3.1.

the author to whom I refer¹⁰ accepts the Greek word νοῦς as a figure of a man and αἰσθησις as that of a woman. Hence, some have interpreted Adam to mean an earthly νοῦς. In the Gospel the Lord sets forth the parable of the virgins who awaited the coming of the bridegroom with either lighted or extinguished lamps. Thus He exemplifies either the pure emotions of the wise or the impure senses of the unwise.¹¹ If Eve, that is, the emotions of the first woman, had kept her lamp lighted, she would not have enfolded us in the meshes of her sin. She would not have fallen from the height of immortality which is established as the reward of virtue.

Chapter 3

(12) Paradise is, therefore, a land of fertility—that is to say, a soul which is fertile—planted in Eden, that is, in a certain delightful or well-tilled land in which the soul finds pleasure. Adam exists there as νοῦς [mind] and Eve as ‘sense.’ Take note of what this soul of ours has in the nature of defense against natural and weak tendencies or against situations which might be unfavorable to us in our attempts to avoid danger.

(13) There was a fount which irrigated the land of Paradise.¹ Is not this stream our Lord Jesus Christ, the Fount as well as the Father of eternal life? It is written: ‘For with thee is the fountain of life.’² Hence: ‘From within him there shall flow living waters.’³ We read of a fountain and a river which irrigates in Paradise the fruit-bearing tree that

¹⁰ Cf. Philo, *De opificio mundi* 59; *Legum allegoriae* I 29.

¹¹ Cf. Matt. 25.1.

¹ Cf. Gen. 2.10.

² Ps. 35.10.

³ John 7.38; cf. Isa. 58.11.

bears fruit for life eternal. You have read, then, that a fount was there and that 'a river rose in Eden,'⁴ that is, in your soul there exists a fount. This is the meaning of Solomon's words: 'Drink water out of thy own cistern and the streams of thy own well.'⁵ This refers to the fount which rose out of that well-tilled soul, full of pleasant things, this fount which irrigates Paradise, that is to say, the soul's virtues that blossom because of their eminent merits.

(14) 'The river,' we are told, 'is separated into four branches. The name of one is Phison which encircles all the land of Hevila, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx there. The name of the second river is Gihon. This river encircles all the land of Ethiopia. The name of the third river is Tigris, which river flows by the Assyrians. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.'⁶ There are, therefore, four rivers. Phison—so called by the Hebrews, but named Ganges by the Greeks—flows in the direction of India. Gihon is the river Nile, which flows around the land of Egypt or Ethiopia. The land enclosed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is called Mesopotamia because it lives between these two rivers. This name conveys its location even to far-distant peoples and, besides, expresses popular belief. But how is the fount called the Wisdom of God? That this is a fount the Gospel tells us in the words, 'If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink.'⁷ Wisdom is a fount according to the Prophet: 'Come and eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.'⁸ As Wisdom is the fountain of life, it is also the fountain of spiritual grace. It is also the fountain of other virtues which guide us to the course of eternal life. Therefore, the stream

4 Gen. 2.10.

5 Prov. 5.15.

6 Gen. 2.10-14.

7 John 7.37.

8 Prov. 9.15.

that irrigates Paradise rises from the soul when well-tilled, not from the soul which lies uncultivated. The results therefrom are fruit trees of diverse virtues. There are four principal trees which constitute the divisions of Wisdom. These are the well-known four principal virtues: prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice. The wise men of this world have adopted this division from us and transferred it to their writings. Hence, Wisdom acts as the source from which these four rivers take their rise, producing streams that are composed of these virtues.

(15) Phison, therefore, stands for prudence. Hence it has pure gold, brilliant rubies, and topaz stones. We often refer to wise discoveries as gold, as the Lord says, speaking through the Prophet: 'I gave to them gold and silver.'⁹ Daniel says of the wise: 'If you sleep among the midst of the lots, you shall be as the wings of the dove covered with silver and the hinder parts of her back like to gold.'¹⁰ In this way one who puts his trust in the aid of the Old and New Testament can by resourceful inquiry attain the inmost secrets of the Wisdom of God. Here, therefore, is found pure gold, not the metal which is melted, which belongs to this earth, and is subject to corruption. In this land, we are told, there is found the brilliant ruby stone in which there exists the vital spark of our souls. Here, too, is the topaz stone which by the nature of its color reveals an effect of greenness and vitality. Plants which are alive give forth green sprouts, while those that are dead are sapless and dry. The earth grows green when it is in bloom. The seeds, too, sprout forth green shoots in their periods of growth. The river Phison is rightfully given first place. The Hebrews call it Pheoyson, which means 'change of mouth,' because it flows even through Lydia and not merely around one nation, for Wisdom, which is of

⁹ Osee 2.8.

¹⁰ Ps. 67.14.

benefit to all men, is productive and useful. Hence, if a person were to leave Paradise, this river of Wisdom would be the first object he would meet. Thus he may not become inert and arid and his return to Paradise may be facilitated. Many men resort to this river, which is considered to have marvelous beauty and fecundity. Accordingly, it is regarded as a figure of Wisdom, which confers manifold fruits in the coming of the Lord of Salvation. It flows, too, to the very ends of the earth, because, by Wisdom all men have been redeemed. Wherefore it is written: 'Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth and their words unto the end of the world.'¹¹

(16) The second river is Gihon, by which, when they were sojourning in Egypt, was laid down the law of the Israelites that they should depart from Egypt,¹² and having girded their loins they should as a sign of temperance partake of a lamb. It is fitting that the chaste and the sanctified should celebrate the Pasch of the Lord. For that reason, the observance of the Law was first carried out beside that river, the name of which signifies an opening of the earth. Therefore, just as an opening absorbs the earth and whatever defilements and refuse there may be in it, in like manner chastity tends to consume all the passions of the body. Appropriately, then, the observance of the established Law first took place there, because carnal sin is absorbed by the Law. And so Gihon, which is a figure of chastity, is said to surround the land of Ethiopia in order to wash away our lowly bodies and quench the fires of our vile flesh. The meaning of Ethiopia in Latin is 'holy and vile.' What is more lowly, what is more like Ethiopia, than our bodies, blackened, too, by the darkness of sin?

(17) The third river is the Tigris, which flows by the

¹¹ Ps. 18.5.

¹² Exod. 12.11.

Assyrian land. To this river the deceiver Israel was dragged as a prisoner. This river is the swiftest of all rivers. The Assyrian dwell by it, guarding its course—for this is the meaning of its name. Hence, those who by their fortitude hold in check the guileful vices of the body and direct themselves to higher things are thought to have something in common with this river. For that same reason fortitude emanates from that source in Paradise. Fortitude in its rapid course tosses aside everything standing in its path and like this river is not hindered by any material obstacle.

(18) The fourth river is the Euphrates, which means in Latin 'fecundity and abundance of fruits.' It presents a symbol of Justice, the nourishment of every soul. No virtue produces more abundant benefits than Equity or Justice, which is more concerned with others than with itself, neglecting its own advantages, and preferring the common good. Many derive Euphrates from the Greek ἀπὸ τοῦ εὐφροαίνεσθαι, that is, from a 'feeling of gladness,' because the human race rejoices in nothing more than it does in Justice and Equity. The question as to why, although the location itself of other rivers is reported, we have no description of the regions through which the river Euphrates flows calls for an answer. The waters of this river are considered to have a vital quality which fosters growth and increase. Wherefore, the wise men among the Hebrews and the Assyrians called this river Auxen [increase] in contradistinction to the water of other rivers. The opposition has been well established between wisdom and malice, fortitude and irascibility, temperance, and other vices. Justice, on the other hand, is the most important as it represents the concord of all the other virtues. Hence it is not known from the places from which it flows, that is to say, it is not known in part. Justice is not divisible into parts. It is, as it were, the mother of all virtues. In these four rivers are symbolized,

therefore, the four principal virtues. It may well be said that these virtues have been the determining boundary lines for the four great ages of the world. This, in fact, is the topic of the discourse which follows.

(19) The first age, then, is the age of Wisdom. This period extends from the beginnings of the world up to the time of the Flood. The Lord has given us the names of the just men of this age. Abel was so called, and so was Enos, a man made to the image of God, who hoped to invoke the name of the Lord God. Henoah, also, whose name in Latin means 'grace of God,' was carried up to heaven,¹³ and Noe, who was a just man,¹⁴ and one who might be called a guide to tranquillity.¹⁵

(20) The second age of the world is that of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob, and a number of other patriarchs. This was a period in which religion flourished in its more temperate and purest form. Pure was Isaac, a son given to Abraham according to promise, not as an offering of the body, but as a gift of divine beneficence. In him there is found the figure of Him who is pure as the Apostle teaches. 'The promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. He does not say, "And to his offsprings," but as of one, "And to thy offspring," who is Christ.'¹⁶

(21) The third age lies in the period of the Law of Moses and in the time of the other Apostles. 'For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, of Barac, of Samson, of David and of Samuel, Elias and Eliseus, who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became

13 Cf. Gen. 5.24.

14 Cf. Gen. 6.9.

15 Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 7.6.15.

16 Gal. 3.16.

valiant in battle and captured the camps of aliens.¹⁷ Not without reason, then, do these men stand as types of fortitude. Further on we are told: 'They were sawed asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword. They went about in goatskins, destitute, distressed, afflicted—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering in deserts, mountains, caves and holes in the earth.'¹⁸ Appropriately, therefore, do we set these men down as types of Fortitude.

(22) The figure of Justice is, according to the Gospel, a meritorious one, because 'it is unto salvation to everyone who believes.'¹⁹ Hence, the Lord Himself says: 'Permit us to fulfill all justice.'²⁰ She is truly the prolific parent of the other virtues. Yet, whoever possesses any of the above-mentioned principal virtues has the other virtues, also, since these virtues are so connected as to form a unit. Surely, Abel, a just and courageous man, Abraham, a man of great patience, the Prophets, men of the greatest wisdom, and Moses, a man of great learning, considered that the ingloriousness of Christ brought far greater honor than the treasures of Egypt. Who was wiser than Daniel? Solomon, too, sought wisdom and merited it.²¹ Enough has been said, therefore, on the subject of the four rivers of virtue whose waters are salutary. We have discussed, too, the reason why Phison is said to have not only the gold, but also the ruby and the topaz stone, of that goodly land. We propose now to develop the latter topic.

(23) Since Enos in his wisdom yearned to know the name of God, he seems to us to stand for gold that is good.²² Enoch, who was borne aloft and did not see death, can be

¹⁷ Heb. 11.32-34.

¹⁸ Heb. 11.37,38.

¹⁹ Cf. Rom. 1.16.

²⁰ Matt. 3.15.

²¹ Cf. 3 Kings 3.8.

²² Cf. Gen. 4.26; 5.24.

likened to a ruby stone of pleasant odor which holy Henoah by his works offered to God, thus exhaling in his active and exemplary life something akin to sweetness. Noe, on the other hand, like the green topaz stone, suggests a color which represents life, since he alone at the time of the Flood preserved in his ark the vital seed of the formation of the world to come. Paradise, a land watered by many rivers, is then appropriately situated in the East and not in the regions facing it. This reference to the East is significant, for the rising sun may be compared to Christ²³ who flashed forth a gleam of eternal light which exists in Eden, that is, in a land of delight.

Chapter 4

(24) 'And God took the man whom he has created and placed him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.'¹ Note, now, the person who was taken and the land where he was formed. The virtue of God, therefore, took man and breathed into him, so that man's virtue will advance and increase. God set him apart in Paradise that you may know that man was taken up, that is to say, was breathed upon by the power of God. Note the fact that man was created outside Paradise, whereas woman was made within it. This teaches us that each person acquires grace by reason of virtue, not because of locality or of race. Hence, although created outside Paradise, that is, in an inferior place, man is found to be superior, whereas woman, created in a better place, that is to say, in Paradise, is found to be inferior. She was first to be deceived and was responsible for deceiving the man. Wherefore the Apostle Paul has related that holy

²³ Cf. Matt. 24.27.

¹ Gen. 2.15.

women have in olden times been subject to the stronger vessel and recommends them to obey their husbands as their masters.² And Paul says: 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and was in sin.'³ This is a warning that no one ought to rely on himself, for she who was made for assistance needs the protection of a man.⁴ The head of the woman is man, who, while he believed that he would have the assistance of his wife, fell because of her.⁵ Wherefore, no one ought to entrust himself lightly to another unless he has first put that person's virtue to the test. Neither should he claim for himself in the role of protector one whom he believes is subservient to him. Rather, a person should share his grace with another. Especially is this true of one who is in the position of greater strength and one who plays the part of protector. We have advice of the Apostle Peter, wherein he recommends that husbands pay honor to their wives: Husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives considerately, paying honor to the woman as to the weaker vessel and as co-heir of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.⁶

(25) Therefore man was placed in Paradise, while the woman was created in Paradise. The woman, even before she was deceived by the serpent, shared grace with a man, since she was taken from a man. Yet 'this is a great mystery,'⁷ as the Apostle said. Wherefore he traced the source of life from it. And so Scripture refers only to man in the words: 'He placed him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.'⁸ The act of tilling and the act of keeping are one and the same thing. In tilling there is a certain exercise of

2 1 Peter 3.1.

3 1 Tim. 2.14.

4 Cf. Gen. 2.18.

5 1 Cor. 11.3.

6 1 Peter 3.7.

7 Eph. 5.32.

8 Gen. 2.15.

man's virtue, while in keeping it is understood that the work is accomplished, for protection implies something completed. These two acts are required of man. In this way, it is generally assumed, man can seek after something new and may keep what he has acquired. Philo, on the other hand, limited his interpretation of this Scriptural passage to its moral aspect, since, because of his Jewish tendencies, he did not understand its spiritual import. He maintained that the two aspects were those of tilling the fields and of protecting the home. Although, he said, Paradise did not require labor in the fields, the first man, even in Paradise, undertook a kind of toil so as to furnish a law for future ages by which to bind us to the performance and to the preservation of our bounden duty and to the function of supporting hereditary succession.⁹ Both these point of view, the moral and the spiritual, are exacted of you. The prophetic psalm instructs you regarding this: 'Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, they watch in vain that keepeth it.'¹⁰ It is obvious that the laborers are those who engage in the actual operation of building, while the watchers are those to whom the duty of protecting the perfected work is entrusted. Hence the Lord said to the Apostles, as if they were on the point of perfecting their work: 'Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'¹¹ By this He meant that the function of a nature that was perfected along with the grace of abundant virtue should be preserved and that no one, even one who has attained some perfection, ought to feel really secure of himself unless he remains vigilant.

9 Cf. Philo, *Quaestiones in Gen.* 1.14 (found in a Latin translation from the Armenian); see Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, suppl. vol. I.

10 Ps. 126.1.

11 Matt., 26.41.

Chapter 5

(26) 'And the Lord God commanded the man thus: 'from every tree of the garden thou shalt eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for the day you eat of it you shall die.'¹ Why did He use the singular 'thou shalt eat' when He bade them eat of every tree, and, again, when He bade them eat of the tree of good and evil, why did He use the plural 'You shall not eat'? This is no trifling question. This problem can, in fact, be solved by the authority of the Scriptures if you study them carefully. Scripture refers to something good and something that should be done. What is good is naturally associated with what should be done. On the other hand, what is base is separate and unrelated to what should be done. And so the Lord, aiming always at oneness, gave orders in accordance with this principle. Hence He achieves oneness who 'has made both one'²—He not only made both one, for He bade us to be 'one body and one Spirit.'³ 'The first-born of every creature,'⁴ since He is in union with the faith, is always closely joined to the Father, because 'the Word was with God.'⁵ Wherefore He says: 'I and the Father are one,'⁶ in order to show His union with the Father in majesty and in dignity. But He bade us to be one and transfused into us by the adoption of grace the likeness of His own nature and His own oneness, saying: 'Father, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them and thou in me.'⁷ When He

1 Gen. 2.16.

2 Eph. 2.14.

3 Eph. 4.4.

4 Col. 1.15.

5 John 1.1.

6 John 10.30.

7 John 17.22.

prescribes a good, therefore, He does it to one person, saying, 'Thou shalt eat,' for the oneness cannot be gainsaid. Where, however, He says that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil should not be tasted, He speaks in effect to several people: 'You shall not eat.' What has been prohibited has general application to several people. But I have another opinion on this matter. I am able to discover the meaning of what we are discussing in the very words of God Himself. Adam alone was bidden to taste of every tree and it was foreseen that he would follow that injunction. In the plural sense, and not in the singular, God sees that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil should not be tasted. He knew that the woman would sin. Thus, by using the plural, God points out that they will not follow the injunction, because, where there are many, there are differences of opinion.

(27) If we look into the sense of the words as expressed in the Septuagint,⁸ the meaning is clear. Symmachus, however, takes both expressions in a singular sense. This is explained by the fact that in the Law, God, addressing His people, uses the singular: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord' and 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'⁹ I am not influenced by the interpretation of Symmachus, who could not see the oneness of the Father and Son, although at times both he and Asylas admitted it in their discussions. The fact that God addresses in the singular number a people who will later contravene His commands should not lead us to think that I am dissenting from my former statement, inasmuch as the Jewish people, regarded as a single person, violated the injunctions imposed upon them. We have here a law of the Spirit whereby God addresses the people in

⁸ The Vulgate has the singular form: *ne comedas*; the Septuagint has the plural: οὐ φάγεσθε.

⁹ Deut. 6.4,5.

divine language. In this case we should consider not so much the words as their prophetic import. Wherefore He says: 'Thou shalt not boil a kid in the milk of his dam.'¹⁰

(28) From this point on, the celestial precepts present no great difficulty. However, there has been raised by several authors a question which we ought to answer lest simple minds be led astray by erroneous interpretation. Many authors, like Apelles in his thirty-eighth volume,¹¹ propose the following questions. How is it, for example, that the tree of life has more power for giving life than the breath of God? Again, if man is not made perfect by God and each person acquired by his own effort a more perfect state of virtue for himself, does it not seem that man would gain for himself more than God had bestowed on him? Then they make the objection that, if man had not tasted death, he certainly could not be aware of what he had not tasted. What man had not tasted was something unknown to him. Accordingly, he could not be afraid of that of which he had no knowledge. To no purpose, therefore, did God inflict death as a punishment on men for whom it holds no fear.

(29) We should be aware of the fact, therefore, that where God has planted a tree of life He has also planted a tree of life in the midst of Paradise. It is understood that He planted it in the middle. Therefore, in the middle of Paradise there was both a tree of life and a cause for death. Keep in mind that man did not create life. By carrying out and observing the precepts of God it was possible for man to find life. This was the life mentioned by the Apostle: 'Your life is hidden with Christ in God.'¹² Man, therefore, was, figuratively speaking, either in the shadow of life—

¹⁰ Exod. 34.26.

¹¹ Apelles; cf. Harnack, *TU* 6.3.116.

¹² Col. 3.3.

because our life on earth is but a shadow—or man had life, as it were, in pledge, for he had been breathed on by God. He had, therefore, a pledge of immortality, but while in the shadow of life he was unable, by the usual channels of sense, to see and attain the hidden life of Christ with God. Although not yet a sinner, he was not possessed of an incorrupt and inviolable nature. Of course, one who afterwards lapsed into sin was far from being as yet in the category of sinner. Hence, he was in the shadow of life, whereas sinners are in the shadow of death. According to Isaias, the people who sinned sat in the shadow of death.¹³ For these a light arose, not by the merits of their virtues, but by the grace of God. There is no distinction, therefore, between the breath of God and the food of the tree of life. No man can say that he can acquire more by his own efforts than what is granted him by the generosity of God. Would that we had been able to hold on to what we had received! Our toils avail only to the extent that we take back again what was once conferred on us. The third objection, that one who has not tasted death cannot fear it, finds its solution in our common experience. There is an instinct innate in all living creatures which impels them to dread even what they have not yet experienced as harmful. Why is it that doves, even at the moment of their birth, are terrorized at the sight of a hawk? Why are wolves dreaded by sheep and hawks by chickens? In irrational animals there is a certain innate fear of creatures of a different species to the extent that, even though these animals are irrational, they have a feeling that death is something to be shunned. Such being the case, how true is it that the first man, fully and indubitably endowed with reason, should be conscious of the fact that death is something to be avoided!

¹³ Isa. 9.2.

Chapter 6

(30) There are some, again, who suggest for solution difficulties such as the following. For example, they maintain that refusal to obey an order is not always wrong. If the order is a good one, then the act of obeying is commendable. But if the order is a wicked one, it is not feasible to obey it. Therefore, it is not always wrong to disobey an order, but it is wrong to refuse to obey an order that is good. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a creation that is good, since God had knowledge of good and evil. Hence He says: 'Indeed! The man has become like one of us.'¹ If, therefore, possessing the knowledge of good and evil is good and if what God has is a good, it would appear that the prohibition to prevent man from making use of it is not a righteous one. Such is their argument. But, if they were to realize the real significance and force of the word 'knowledge' as they should—'The Lord knew who belong to him,' 'that is, He knew those surely among whom He dwells and walks, who were made one out of so many—then certainly these people would know that knowledge is not to be interpreted merely as superficial comprehension, but as the carrying out of what ought to be accomplished. Man ought to obey the command. A failure to obey is a violation of duty. The man, therefore, who disobeys falls into error because violation of duty is a sin. Even if these people should agree to a modified meaning of the word 'knowledge' and consider that an imperfect comprehension of good and evil was prohibited, in that respect, too, there is a violation of duty in not complying with the command. The Lord God has made it clear that even an imperfect comprehension of good and evil should be prohibited.

¹ Gen. 3.32.

² Num. 16.5; 2 Tim. 2.19.

(31) Another problem: The man who does not know good and evil differs in no respect from a little child. A judge who is just does not consider a child to be guilty of crime. The just Creator of the world would never have found fault with a child for his lack of knowledge of good and evil, because a child cannot be charged with a violation of a law. In the preceding passage, however, we have said that, once you accept the fact that there is a knowledge that is imperfect, then knowledge of good and evil may be taken in two senses. It is certainly false to hold that the man who does not know good and evil is not different from a child. If it is wrong to maintain that such a man does not differ from a child, then Adam is not to be thought of as a child. If he was not a child, then surely he is liable to sin, inasmuch as he is not a child. If he is subject to sin, then punishment follows the sin, because the man who cannot avoid sin is reckoned to be liable to punishment. It can even happen that the person who has no knowledge of good and evil may not be a child: 'For before the child knew good and evil, he refused the evil.' Again we read: 'For before the child knew to call his father and mother, he will receive the strength of Damascus and the toils of Samaria.'³ Perfect, therefore, is the man who performs a good deed even if he has not attained the knowledge of good and evil, just as 'many are a law to themselves'⁴ even before they know the Law. Was the Apostle before he learned: 'Thou shalt not lust,' quite unaware that concupiscence was a sin? On this point he says: 'I did not know sin save through the Law. For I had not known lust unless the Law had said, "Thou shalt not lust."'⁵ Even a child can become by the law of nature perfect in that respect before he knows that con-

³ Isa. 7.16; 8.4.

⁴ Rom. 2.14.

⁵ Exod. 20.17; Rom. 7.7.

cupiscence is a sin or admit the sin of concupiscence. Hence, God willed that man know the nature of evil in a superficial fashion lest, being imperfect, he may be unable to avoid evil. By not obeying a command we are subject to blame. We are thus led to admit our error. Again, if we are referring to a very profound knowledge of good and evil which in itself makes for perfection . . .⁶ A little child is not, like a grown-up, immediately to be chastised, because he has not yet reached a capacity to understand.

(32) Again, more criticisms crop up.⁷ There is the objection that a person who does not know good and evil is unaware that disobedience to a command is in itself an evil, nor is he aware that that obedience to a command is itself a good. Hence it is argued that the person who is in this respect ignorant is deserving, not of condemnation, but of pardon. What we have already maintained above presents a ready solution to this problem. Man is capable of realizing that the utmost deference should be given to his Maker because of what God had already conferred on him, namely, the fact that God had breathed on him and that he was placed in the Garden of Delight. Wherefore, if he was ignorant of the meaning of good and evil, nevertheless, since the Creator of such mighty things had declared that one should not eat of the tree of good and evil, loyal adherence should be given to Him who gave the command. It was not a question of technical knowledge, but of fidelity. He certainly was aware that God was in a position of pre-eminence and, as such, heed should be paid to His command. Although he did not understand the precise significance of the commands, he was conscious of the fact that deference should be paid to the person of the Commander. This conviction on his part stemmed from nature. He was as yet

⁶ Schenkl points to a lacuna in the manuscript here.

⁷ From Apelles; cf. Harnack, *op. cit.*

incapable of discriminating between good and evil. Wherefore the woman answers the serpent: 'Of the fruit of all the trees in the garden we shall eat, but of the fruit in the middle of the garden, God said, you shall not eat of it.'⁸ She knew, therefore, that the command must be obeyed. Hence she said: We shall eat of every fruit which the Lord ordered, but God has given an order that one should not eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden, lest he die. Wherefore, she who knew that the command should be obeyed was surely aware that it was wrong not to comply with the command and that she would be justly condemned for her refusal to obey.

(33) One more point. The circumstances connected with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were such as to convince us that both good and evil were recognized. We are led to believe from the evidence of Scripture that such was the case: 'When they both ate, their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked,'⁹ that is, the eyes of their mind were opened and they realized the shame of being naked. For that reason, when the woman ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil she certainly sinned and realized that she had sinned. On realizing this, she should not have invited her husband to share in her sin. By enticing him and by giving him what she herself had tasted she did not nullify her sin; rather, she repeated it. Certainly it stands to reason that she did intend to lure the person whom she loved to share in her punishment. She should be expected to ward off from one who was unaware of it the danger of falling into a sin of which she had knowledge. Yet this woman, knowing that she could not remain in Paradise after the Fall, seems to have had a fear that she alone would be ejected from the Garden. Hence, after the

⁸ Gen. 3.2,3.

⁹ Gen. 3.6,7.

Fall, they both went into hiding. Being aware, therefore, that she would have to be separated from the man she loved, she had no desire to be deceived.

(34) Another point. Knowledge of evil does not make evil. An act is necessary to complete its conditions. There is no immediate connection between the knower of what is evil and the doer. He is guilty who does what he knows to be evil. Either anger or cupidity is the customary means of arousing a person to perform an evil act. It does not necessarily follow that one who has knowledge of evil, unless he is the victim of anger or cupidity, will do what he knows is wrong. To repeat what we have said, the incentives to sin are anger and cupidity. To these we may add extreme fear, which itself may give rise to cupidity, inasmuch as everyone is anxious to avoid what is the cause of his fear. With reason, therefore, have we established that the incentives to the other vices are anger and cupidity. Let us consider, then, whether Eve was aroused to wrong-doing by these incentives. She was not angry with her consort. She was not a victim of cupidity. Again, she merely erred in giving her husband to eat of what she had already tasted. Cupidity had been at first responsible for her error in inducing him to eat and it was the occasion for the subsequent sin. This can be explained in the following way. She was unable to desire what she had already eaten and, after eating she acquired a knowledge of evil. She ought not, therefore, have made her husband a partaker of the evil of which she was conscious; neither should she have caused her own husband to violate the divine command. She sinned, therefore, with forethought, and knowingly made her husband a participant in her own wrong-doing. If it were not so, what is related of the tree of knowledge of good and evil would be found to be in error, if it were established that, after she ate of that tree, she was without knowledge of evil. But, if what Scripture

says is true, cupidity was the motive of her act. Many, however, are of the opinion that she should be excused for the reason that, because she loved her husband, she was afraid that she would be separated from him. They offer this as grounds for her cupidity: namely, that she desired to be with her husband.

Chapter 7

(35) Still another problem arises.¹ From what source did death come to Adam? Was it from the nature of a tree of this sort or actually from God? If we ascribe this to the nature of the tree, then the fruit of this tree seems to be superior to the vivifying power of the breath of God, since its fruit had drawn into death's toils him on whom the divine breath had bestowed life. If we maintain that God is the responsible cause of death, then we can be held to accuse Him of inconsistency. We seem to accuse Him of being so devoid of beneficence as to be unwilling to pardon when He had the power to do so, or of being powerless if He was unable to forgive. Let us see, therefore, how this question can be resolved. The solution, unless I am mistaken, lies in the fact that, since disobedience was the cause of death, for that very reason, not God, but man himself, was the agent of his own death. If, for example, a physician were to prescribe to a patient what he thought should be avoided, and if the patient felt that these prohibitions were unnecessary, the physician is not responsible for the patient's death. Surely in that case the patient is guilty of causing his own death. Hence, God as a good physician forbade Adam to eat what would be injurious to him.

(36) Another point. To know what is good is better than

¹ From Apelles; cf. Harnack, *op. cit.*

to be ignorant of it. It is fitting that a person who knows what is good know, also, what is evil, in order that he may know the means to avoid it and, by taking the necessary precautions, that he may act with discretion. Again, it is not sufficient to know merely what is evil, lest, although you know what is evil, you may find yourself deprived of what is good. It is best, therefore, that we know both so that, since we know what is good, we may avoid evil. Again, from the fact that we are aware of evil we may give our preference to the charm of what is good. Moreover, we ought to know both so that our knowledge may be profound and so that we may put in practice what we know, act and acknowledge to be in perfect balance. Besides, Scripture points out that more is expected of him who has general knowledge of both than of him who is ignorant of them.² Knowledge of what you cannot achieve or avoid is a grievous thing. Grievous, too, is knowledge which is not put into practice and into operation to its fullest extent. Without knowledge of what is harmful or beneficial to a patient and without the power of being able to utilize to the best advantage that knowledge, a physician is likely to act in such a way as to lose his reputation. Hence, knowledge is not salutary unless it is put into practice in the best possible way.

(37) Still another point. Not without reason was the tree of knowledge of good and evil grown in the middle of the Garden, and the prohibition against it was unnecessary if it was grown for each and every man. This tree was designed for the use of just one man, who received the command that he make use not only of that tree, but of the other trees besides. You can find many, even countless, instances in which a person can, because of ignorance of procedure, suffer real harm. Wealth itself will be found to be unprofitable to a rich man if he refuses to act in a

² Cf. Luke 13.47,48.

generous fashion toward the poor. He may shut out the needy and deprive them of assistance and, because of his superior powers, he may extort for his own purpose what belongs to another. The very possession of beauty and of physical charm is more likely than deformity to lead one to vice. For that reason, therefore, does anyone desire to have children who are unsightly rather than handsome? Or desire their offspring to be poverty-stricken rather than well-to-do? There are many instances of this sort which are not to be ascribed to the lack of wisdom in the giver, but to the person who misuses the gifts. The fault lies not so much in the person who makes the gifts as in the person who makes use of them.

Chapter 8

(38) Another problem.¹ Did God know that Adam would violate His commands? Or was He unaware of it? If He did not know, we are faced with a limitation of His divine power. If He knew, yet gave a command which He was aware would be ignored, it is not God's providence to give an unnecessary order. It was in the nature of a superfluous act to give to Adam, the first created being, a command which He knew would not at all be observed. But God does nothing superfluous. Therefore, the words of Scripture do not come from God. This is the objection of those who do not, by interposing these questions, admit the authenticity of the Old Testament. But these people are to be condemned out of their own mouths. Since these same persons concede the authenticity of the New Testament, they must be convinced by evidence to believe in the Old. If they see that God is consistent in His commands and in

¹ From Apelles.

His deeds, it is clear that they must concede that both Testaments are the work of one Author. The following example should convince them that a command to one who will disobey is not something superfluous or unjust. The Lord Himself chose Judas, one who, He knew, would betray Him. If these men think that he was chosen unwisely, they restrict the power of God. But they cannot hold this opinion, since Scripture declares: 'For Jesus knew who it was who should betray him.'² These defamers of the Old Testament should therefore hold their peace.

(39) Possible objections on the part of the Gentiles who do not admit this evidence stand in need of a response. Since the Gentiles demand a rational explanation, here is the reason why the Son of God either gave a command to one who is going to disobey it or has chosen one who is going to betray Him. The Lord Jesus came to save all sinners.³ He was bound to show concern even for the wicked. Accordingly, He was bound not to disregard one who was to betray Him. He wished that all might take note that in the choice even of His betrayer He was offering a sign for the salvation of all of us. No injury was done to Adam in that he received a command, or to Judas because he was chosen. God did not lay it down as a necessary consequence that one should disobey and the other should betray Him. Both could have abstained from sin if they had guarded what they had received. Hence, although He knew that all the Jews would not believe, He stated: 'I have not come except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'⁴ The fault is, therefore, not in the one issuing the command; the sin is rather in the one who disobeys. God's intent was this: He wanted to show to everyone that He willed to give freedom to all

² John 6.65.

³ Cf. Luke 19.10.

⁴ Matt. 15.24.

mankind. I do not mean to maintain that He did not know of the disobedience to come. Rather, I contend that He did know, but that He should not for that reason be subject to reproach for a betrayer who met death. God should not be accused of being the cause why both lapsed. In fact, both stand convicted and condemned, because one received a command not to fall into sin, and the other was enrolled among the Apostles in order that he, as the result of kindness, might change his intention to betray. At some time in the future when the other Apostles would be found wanting, he might well become a source of comfort to all. In effect, there would not exist any sin if there were no prohibition. Without the existence of sin there would be no such thing as wrong-doing or, perhaps, even virtue, which could not have any cause for existence or for pre-eminence without the aid of unrighteousness to offset it. What is sin, if not the violation of divine law and the disobedience to heavenly precepts? Not by the ear, but by the mind, do we form a judgment regarding injunction from above. But with the Word of God before us we are able to formulate opinions on what is good and what is evil. One of these we naturally understand should be, as evil, avoided, and the other we understand has been recommended to us as a good. In this respect we seem to be listening to the very voice of the Lord, whereby some things are forbidden and other things are advised. If a person does not comply with the injunctions which are believed to have been once ordained by God, he is considered to be liable to punishment. The commands of God are impressed in our hearts by the Spirit of the living God. We do not read these orders as if they were recorded in ink on a tablet of stone.⁵ Hence, in our own thought we formulate a law: 'For if the Gentiles who have no law do by nature what the law prescribes, those having

⁵ 2^d Cor. 3.3.

no law of this kind are a law unto themselves. They show the work of the law written in their hearts.⁶ There is something, therefore, like the Law of God which exists in the hearts of men.

(40) These same people raise another objection. Instead of that command which we said was established in the mind of man, they would maintain that this very impression in our minds by God was itself the prescription of a divine law. The question is raised: Did the Creator of man know that man would fall into sin and so implanted those opinions of what is good and evil in the mind of man or was He unaware that this would happen? If you concede that He did not know of it, you attribute to God something alien to His majesty. If, on the other hand, you maintain that, although God was aware that man would sin, He impressed in man's mind a realization of what is good and evil, so that he would be unable, because of the admixture of evil, to live forever—then in one case you imply that God was not prescient and in the other that He was not beneficent. From this the conclusion is reached that man was not the creation of God. We have already stated that these men maintain that God had not imposed a command. Now they say that man was not created by God, because God did not create evil. Man, on the other hand, had a mental conception of evil, inasmuch as he was enjoined to abstain from evil. In this way they venture to assert that there were two gods: one who is good; the other, the Creator of man. We must follow the lines of their own logic in formulating our reply. If they hold that man was not made by God, because man is a sinner, and if they recoil from conceding this point, lest a good God may not seem to the creator of sinners (because they do not believe that God is good who made a sinner)—then let them declare whether this artificer

⁶ Rom. 2.14,15.

of man has in their opinion also been made by God? If, as they state, this artificer of man was created by God, how can it be possible that a God who is good is also the agent of evil? If the creator of a sinner is not good, then more serious implications result if we postulate the maker of him who is the artificer of a sinner. A God who is good is bound to prevent the birth of him who shall have to introduce the substance of sin. But if they maintain that this artificer was not created, than the problem arises as to whether a God who is good could or could not in any way prevent the growth of evil. If such a God cannot do this, then He is powerless. Inasmuch as such inconsistencies follow our line of argumentation and since the heretics get involved here, also, let us attempt a solution of the problem of why God allowed adversity to enter into this world through an artificer who either did or did not spring from Him, although He had the power to prevent it.

(41) Accordingly, while still holding that the God who is good and the one who is the artificer are one and the same, let us make clear what are the provinces of each. We should at the same time try to meet the objections of those who raise such a question as this: How is it possible that a God who is good has permitted not only adversity to enter this world but has allowed it, too, to be in such a state of disorder?⁷ In truth, this objection would be valid only if this evil so affected the nature of our soul and the secret places of our hearts that riddance was impossible and if, again, this poison had left such deep wounds in our hearts and souls that medication was of no avail.⁸ In fact, this grievance of theirs could be more aptly expressed by stating that, although God is omnipotent, He has permitted man to die. But since God in His pity has reserved for us the

⁷ From Apelles.

⁸ Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.190.

means of obtaining remedy for our sins and still has not rid us of all possibilities of contagion, then let us reflect on the following points. Would it be an unjust and unreasonable act if God, fearful, as it were, of man's frailty and mortality, permitted us to be tempted in such wise that, through penitence for our sins, grace compounded would return once more to our hearts? Again, would it be unjust if man, conscious and fearful of his own frailty (since he found that he could so easily deviate from the orderly path of divine commands) and fearful, too, lest he let loose these heavenly mandates which like a helm guide his soul—would it be unjust if man should finally attribute the recovery of the helm to divine pity and by his safe return acquire some grace as well?

Chapter 9

(42) Now let us investigate the reason why God considered that a command should be given concerning the two classes of trees: the one to be eaten and the other which it was forbidden to eat. Thus, He laid down to man injunctions on the ways of attaining that wonderful and happy life, following which he might not have to suffer death. There are some who think that is was totally inappropriate for the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things to lay down that command and that it was definitely unsuited to the inhabitants of Paradise, because life there was like that of the angels. And so we can conclude that the food provided for eating there was not earthly and corruptible, because those who do not drink or eat 'will be as the angels in heaven.' There is no merit, therefore, in food, because food does not commend us to God. Neither is there great danger therein, because 'what goes into the mouth does not defile a man, but it is what comes out of the mouth.'¹ Undoubtedly, then,

¹ Matt. 22.30; 15.11.

it would appear that the precept [is quite unworthy] of such a great Creator unless you take this food to mean prophetic food, because as a great reward the Lord makes this promise to His saints: 'Behold my servants shall eat and you shall be hungry.'² This is the food that makes for eternal life. Whoever is deprived of this will suffer death, since the Lord Himself is the living and heavenly Bread which gives life to this world. Hence He speaks: 'Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you shall not have life eternal.'³ The bread was, therefore, meant for a certain person. Instructions were given that it should be eaten by the inhabitants of Paradise. Who is that person? We are told who that person is: 'Man ate the bread of angels.'⁴ The bread is good if you do the will of God. Do you wish to know how good that bread was? The Son of God Himself eats of that bread of which He says: 'My food is to do the will of my father who is in heaven.'⁵

(43) Again, let us see why the Lord God said to Adam: 'Ye shall die the death.' What is the difference between saying 'ye shall die' and 'ye shall die the death'? We ought to point out that there is nothing superfluous in the command of God. Here is my solution. Since life and death are contradictory ideas, in unaffected language we say 'we live in life' and 'die in death.' But, if you wish, since life causes life, to double the force of the two concepts, the phrase 'he lives a life' is found in legal documents, and, since death causes death, there is the statement: 'He shall die the death.'⁶ These expressions are not redundant, for life is related to death and death to life, because everyone living

² Isa. 65.13.

³ John 6.50; cf. 6.54.

⁴ Ps. 77.25.

⁵ John 4.34.

⁶ Ezech. 33.14-16.

dies while he is alive and lives when he dies. We find, therefore four categories: to live in life, to die in death, to die in life, to live in death. Since such is the case, we should put aside prejudices due to use and custom, for usage prescribes that the act of dying should be said without distinction of him who dies by death and of him who does so by his life. Accordingly, the Lord selects two of these four distinctive phrases so as to say that the living live, with qualifications as to whether well or ill, and the dying die, without a seeming difference between a good death and a bad one. There is no precise difference in fact between the kind of life or death here referred to. It could include that of irrational creatures or of tiny infants.

(44) Putting aside, therefore, conceptions due to common usage, let us reflect on the meaning of 'to live in life' and 'to die in death' and also 'to live in death' and 'to die in life.' I believe that, in accord with the Scriptures, 'to live in life' signifies a wonderful life of happiness and that it seems to point toward an experience of life's natural functions joined and, by participation, mingled with the grace of a blessed life. This concept, 'to live in life,' means 'to live in virtue,' to bring about in the life of this body of ours a participation in the life of blessedness. On the other hand, what does 'to die in death' mean if not the disintegration of the body at the time of death, when the flesh is devoid of its customary function of carrying on life and the soul is unable to partake in life eternal? There is also the person who 'dies in life,' that is to say, one who is alive in body but, because of his acts, is dead. These are the people who, as the Prophet says: 'Go down alive into hell,' and she of whom the Apostle speaks: 'For she is dead while she is still alive.'⁷ There remains the fourth category, for

⁷ Ps. 54.16; 1 Tim. 5.6.

there are those who 'live in death' like the holy martyrs who give up their lives so that they may live. The flesh dies, but what is good does survive. Far from us, therefore, be the thought of living as participants in death. On the contrary, we should face death and thus become sharers in life. The saint does not desire to be a participant in this life of ours when he states: 'To be dissolved and be with Christ.'⁸ This has been much better stated by another: 'Woe to me that my sojourning has been prolonged,'⁹ in grief certainly that he is limited by the fragility of this life, since he hopes for a share in life eternal. Wherefore I can, on the other hand, state that, although 'to live in life' is a good thing, 'to live for life' would be of doubtful benefit. One can speak of 'living for life,' that is, for the life of eternity with its struggle with the life of the body. One can also speak of 'living for life' in another sense. Anyone, even a pious person, can have a desire for this corporeal life of ours. We can take the example of one who thinks that he ought to live so virtuously as to arrive by his good actions at a ripe old age. Many people who are in weak health, but who still find life a pleasureable thing, are in this category.

(45) Now that we have examined the meaning of the phrase, 'to live for life,' let us now turn attention to the significance of the phrases, 'to die for death' and 'to live for death,' for it is possible to conceive of people who 'die for death' and who 'live for life.' For the person who 'dies for or to death' is one who so lives as to live for the sake of his own soul, because he is not subject to death. We mean by this one who has been loosed from the bonds of grievous death and one who is not bound by the chains of death eternal. He is dead to death, that

⁸ Phil. 1.23.

⁹ Ps. 119.5.

is, he is dead to sin. He is dead to punishment for whom living is contrary to punishment, that is, when a person lives for punishment he lives for death. Again, one who dies for punishment dies for death. There is also the case of one who, although placed in this life, dies for life. Such was the situation of the Apostle who said: It is now no longer I that live, but Christ in me.¹⁰ To sin he is dead, but he lives for God, that is, death in him is dead, but living in him is that life which is the Lord Jesus. Good, therefore, is the life of those who live for God and wicked the life of those who live for sin. There is also a middle course of life, as in the case of other living creatures, for which we may cite the Scriptural passage: 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature in its kind.'¹¹ There is also the life of the dead: 'The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob,' because 'He is not the God of the dead but of the living.'¹² There are those who partake somewhat in both lives, that of the living and of the dead, of whom the Apostle speaks: 'If ye have died with him, ye shall also live with him.'¹³ The same Apostle has said: 'For if we have been united with him in the likeness of death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection also. For we know that our old self has been crucified with him, in order that the body of sin may be destroyed, that we may no longer be slaves to sin, for he who is dead is acquitted of sin.'¹⁴ Just as we have said that there are many forms of life, so, too, we may discover many forms of death. An evil death is recorded in the words, 'The soul that sinneth, the same shall die.'¹⁵ The usual meaning of death

10 Gal. 2.20.

11 Gen. 1.24.

12 Exod. 3.6; Luke 20.37; Mark. 12.26.

13 2 Tim. 2.11.

14 Rom. 6.5-8.

15 Ezech. 18.20.

appears when we say that a person lived so many years and was laid among his fathers.¹⁶ There is the meaning of death as we have it in the sacrament of baptism: 'For we were buried with him by means of baptism into death.' Elsewhere we read: 'For if we have died with Christ, we believe also that we shall live together with him.'¹⁷ You see how the word 'death' is subject to manifold interpretation, but that this life here is ours to contend with.

Chapter 10

(46) Still another question arises, that concerning the saying of the Lord: 'It is not good for man to be alone.'¹ Recognize the fact, first of all, that, when God created man from the slime of the earth, He did not add: 'God saw that it was good,'² as He did in the case of each of His works. If He had said at that time that the creation of man was good, then the other statement that 'it is not good' would be a contradiction in terms, although He had said that the creation of what preceded the formation of man was good. That was the situation at the time of the creation of Adam. But, when He perceived that man and woman were joined together in creation, He did not treat each even then in a special manner, for He soon after states: 'God saw that all he had ever made was very good.'³ The meaning is clear. The creation of both man and woman is considered to be good.

(47) From this question another problem arises. How

¹⁶ Cf. Acts 13.36.

¹⁷ Rom. 6.4,8.

¹ Gen. 2.18.

² Gen. 1.14.

³ Gen. 1.31.

did it happen that, when Adam alone was created, it was not said that it was good, but when a woman also was made, then are we to understand that everything was good? Whereas God in one case commended the whole of creation, as well as every creature in it (including man who is held to be a part of nature), a special reference to man did not then seem necessary. Wherefore, when Adam alone was created, an assertion that this work was good was not thought to be by any means a fitting climax to a satisfactory achievement. It was said, moreover, that it was not good for man to be alone. Yet we know that Adam did not commit sin before woman was created. However, after creation, she was the first to disobey the divine command and even allured her husband to sin. If, therefore, the woman is responsible for the sin, how then can her accession be considered a good? But, if you consider that the universe is in the care of God, then you will discover this fact, namely, that the Lord must have gained more pleasure for Himself in being responsible for all creation than condemnation from us for providing the basis for sin. Accordingly, the Lord declared that it was not good for man to be alone, because the human race could not have been propagated from man alone. God preferred the existence of more than one whom He would be able to save than to have to confine this possibility to one man who was free from error. Inasmuch as He is the Author of both man and woman, He came into this world to redeem sinners. Finally, He did not permit Cain, a man accused of parricide, to perish before he brought forth sons.⁴ For the sake, therefore, of the successive generations of men it followed that woman had to be joined to man. Thus we must interpret the very words of God when He said the it was not good for man to be alone. If the woman

⁴ Gen. 4.15-17.

was to be the first one to sin, the fact that she was the one destined to bring forth redemption must not be excluded from the operations of Divine Providence. Although 'Adam was not deceived, the woman was deceived and was in sin. Yet woman, we are told, 'will be saved by childbearing,'⁵ in the course of which she generated Christ.

(48) Not without significance, too, is the fact that woman was made out of the rib of Adam. She was not made of the same earth with which he was formed, in order that we might realize that the physical nature of both man and woman is identical and that there was one source for the propagation of the human race. For that reason, neither was man created together with a woman, nor were two men and two women created at the beginning, but first a man and after that a woman. God willed it that human nature be established as one. Thus, from the very inception of the human stock He eliminated the possibility that many disparate natures should arise. He said: 'Let us make him a helper like himself.'⁶ We understand that to mean a helper in the generation of the human family—a really good helper. If we take the word 'helper' in a good sense, then the woman's co-operation turns out to be something of major import in the process of generation, just as the earth by receiving, confining, and fostering the seed causes it to grow and produce fruit in time. In that respect, therefore, woman is a good helper even through in an inferior position. We find examples of this in our own experience. We see how men in high and important offices often enlist the help of men who are below them in rank and esteem.

⁵ 1 Tim. 2.14.

⁶ Gen. 2.18.

Chapter 11

(49) Examine, now, the reason why God had by this time created out of the earth 'all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air' and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. How account for the fact that God brought merely the beasts of the field and the birds of the air to Adam? Animals were there, we know, each according to its kind. And so it is related further on: 'Adam named all the animals and all the beasts of the field, but he found no helper like himself.'¹ How can we explain this other than by saying that the untamed beasts and the birds of the air were brought to man by divine power, while man himself held power over the beasts that were tame and domesticated? The former lay within the province of God's activity. The latter were due to the diligence of man. Besides this, there is a reason why everything was brought to Adam. In this way he would be able to see that nature in every aspect is constituted of two sexes: male and female. Following these observations, he would become aware that association with a woman was a necessity of his lot.

(50) 'And God cast Adam into a deep sleep and he slept.' What does the phrase 'deep sleep' signify? Does it not mean that when we contemplate a conjugal union we seem to be turning our eyes gradually in the direction of God's kingdom? Do we not seem, as we enter into a vision of this world, to partake a little of things divine, while we find our repose in the midst of what is secular and mundane? Hence, after the statement, 'He cast Adam into a deep sleep and he slept,' there follows: 'The rib which God took from Adam he built into a woman.'² The word 'built' is well chosen in

¹ Gen. 2.19,20.

² Gen. 2.21,22.

speaking of the creation of a woman because a household, comprising man and wife, seems to point toward a state of full perfection. One who is without a wife is regarded as being without a home. As man is considered to be more skilful in public duties, so woman is esteemed to be more adaptable to domestic ministrations. Reflect on the fact that He did not take a part from Adam's soul but a rib from his body, that is to say, not soul from a soul, but 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh'³ will this woman be called.

(51) Thus we have made clear the cause of the generation of man. But many who reflect deeply on this question are disturbed by another problem. How explain the fact that animals and beasts of the field and birds of the air were in Paradise, if at the beginning God bestowed this great gift to men, namely, the privilege of living there and of expecting afterward that, as a reward of merit, all just men should be restored to that place? Hence, many hold that by Paradise is meant the soul of man and that, while man was placed there as a worker and guardian, certain seeds of virtue sprouted forth. This may be taken to mean that the mind of man, whose virtue it is to cultivate the soul intensively, not only performs its appropriate function, but also acts as a custodian of the work accomplished. The beasts of the field and the birds of the air which were brought to Adam are our irrational senses, because beasts and animals represent the diverse emotions of the body, whether of the more violent kind or even of the more temperate. What else are we to consider the birds of the air if not as representations of our idle thoughts which, like winged creatures, flit around our souls and frequently lead us by their varied motions now in one direction, now in another? Wherefore our faculty of perception, which in Greek is represented by the word αἴσθησις,

³ Gen. 2.23.

constitutes the most congenial aid to the work of our minds. Except for our intellect [νοῦς,] the mind has been unable to find another faculty so like itself.

(52) Perhaps you may argue that God is Himself the Author of error, because He also placed in such a Paradise entities such as these—I mean the passions of the body and the vanity of thoughts that are fleeting and empty. Take note of what He says: 'Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the animals that crawl upon the earth.'⁴ You see that He granted to you the power of being able to discern by the application of sober logic the species of each and every object, in order that you may be induced to form a judgment on all of them. God called them all to your attention, so that you might realize that your mind is superior to all of them. Why have you now willed to make part of yourself and to link close to you what you have discovered to be a totally alien substance? God surely has given you a sense of perception, whereby you can know things in general and can form a judgment about them. Because you were unable to observe God's commands you were deservedly ejected from that fertile Garden. God came to the realization that you were weak and could not discriminate. Hence, He spoke to men in their weakness. 'Do not judge that you may not be judged.'⁵ He bade you, therefore, to be obedient to His imposed command, because He knew that your judgment was weak. If you had not disregarded this order, you would never had run the risk of wavering in your judgment. And, since you wished to form a judgment, for that reason He added: 'Indeed Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.'⁶ You desired to claim judgment as your right. Hence you ought not to

⁴ Gen. 1.25.

⁵ Matt. 7.1.

⁶ Gen. 3.22.

oppose the penalty for misguided judgment. Nevertheless, He placed you in such a position outside Paradise that the recollection of it may never leave you.

(53) Hence the just are caught up into Paradise, just as Paul 'was caught up into paradise and heard secret words that man may not repeat.'⁷ And if by the vigor of your mind you are caught up from the first heaven to the second and from the second heaven to the third, we can explain it in this way. Each and every man is first of all corporeal; secondly, he is of a sensual nature; and thirdly, he is spiritual in that he is carried to the third heaven to behold the brilliance of spiritual grace. 'The sensual man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit.'⁸ For that reason the ascent into the third heaven is necessary for him in order that he may be caught up into Paradise. At this stage, without incurring danger, you will be caught up, in order that you may be able to pass judgment on all things, because 'the spiritual man judges all things and he himself is judged by no man.'⁹ Perchance, although still infirm, you will hear secret words that man may not repeat. Forbear to reveal anything and keep in your heart what you shall hear. Paul the Apostle kept these words in his heart lest he fall and for a certainty lead others into sin. Or perhaps Paul used the words 'that man may not repeat'¹⁰ because he was still in the body, that is to say, because he saw the passions of this body of ours and because he saw the law of his flesh 'warring against the law of his mind.'¹¹ I prefer to take the meaning in this sense, lest the question of future danger should seem to be disregarded. That would imply freedom during our lifetime from the anxiety and dread of snares which

7 2 Cor. 12.4,5.

8 1 Cor. 2.14.

9 1 Cor. 2.15.

10 2 Cor. 12.4.

11 Rom. 7.23.

might lead to sin in the future. Whoever, therefore, shall reach upward into Paradise by the exercise of virtue will hear those hidden and secret words of God. He shall hear, too, the Lord speaking as to the repentant thief who abandoned his life of thievery for one of faith: 'This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.'¹²

Chapter 12

(54) 'Now the serpent was more cunning than any of the beasts of the field which the Lord had made. The serpent said to the woman: Did God say, you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'¹ In the statement 'the serpent was more cunning' you understand to whom reference is made. This is our Adversary, whose wisdom is of this world. Gratification of pleasure has been fittingly called wisdom, because it is called the wisdom of the flesh as in the statement, 'The wisdom of this flesh is hostile to God.'² The seekers after pleasure are shrewd in their choice of means for its gratification. If you understand, therefore, gratification of pleasure to be, in fact, an act contrary to the divine command and hostile to our senses, this is in accord with what Paul states: 'I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner in the law of sin.'³ If you ascribe this to the Devil, what other cause of enmity is there except envy? As Solomon says: 'By the envy of the devil death came into the world.'⁴ The cause of envy was the happiness of man placed in Paradise, because the Devil

¹² Luke 23.43.

¹ Gen. 3.1.

² Rom. 8.7.

³ Rom. 7.23.

⁴ Wisd. 2.24.

could not brook the favors received by man. His envy was aroused because man, though formed in slime, was chosen to be an inhabitant of Paradise. The Devil began to reflect that man was an inferior creature, yet had hopes of an eternal life, whereas he, a creature of superior nature, had fallen and had become part of this mundane existence. This is the substance of his invidious reflection: 'Will this inferior acquire what I was unable to keep? Will he leave the earth and attain heaven, whereas I have fallen to earth thrust down from heaven? I have many ways and means by which to deceive man. He was made of slime, earth is his mother, and he is involved in things corruptible. Although of superior nature, his soul is nevertheless subject to temptation, since it exists in the prison house of the body—witness my own experience in being unable to avoid sin. This, therefore, is my first approach, namely, to deceive him while he is desirous of improving his condition. In this way an attempt will be made to arouse his ambition. The next approach is by way of the flesh, promising fulfillment of all his desires. Finally, how else can I appear to be wiser than all men if not by the exercise of cunning and fraud in my warfare of entrenchment against man?' Accordingly, he contrived not to attack Adam first. Rather, he aimed to circumvent Adam by means of the woman. He did not accost the man who had in his presence received the heavenly command. He accosted her who had learned of it from her husband and who had not received from God the command which was to be observed. There is no statement that God spoke to the woman. We know that he spoke to Adam. Hence we must conclude that the command was communicated through Adam to the woman.

(55) The nature of the temptation presented on this occasion is now clear. In addition to this, there are other occasions when many other kinds of temptations are in store

for us. Some of these come from the Prince of this world, who has vomited into this world what might be called poisonous wisdom, so that men believe the false to be true and are emotionally carried away by mere appearance. The Enemy's attack is not always in the open. There are certain powers who put on the external form of what is desirable and gratifying so as to pour into our thoughts the poison of their iniquities. From this source come those sins which arise from indulgence in pleasures or from some infirmity of the mind. There are still other powers who may be said to wrestle with us, as the Apostle says: 'For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against the Principalities and Powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high.'⁵ They wish by this belligerency of theirs to break us and, so to speak, to force out the breath of life from our bodies. Wherefore, like a good athlete, Paul knew how to parry the blows of the opposing powers and even to strike them as they advanced to the attack. Hence he says: 'I strike with my fists, not as one beating the air.'⁶ And so like a good athlete he merited the crown of victory.⁷ The temptations of the Devil, then, are manifold. For that reason he is believed to be a deadly, double-tongued serpent, doing the Devil's work by saying one thing with the tongue and by harboring other thoughts in his mind. There are other servants of the Devil who aim at us poisonous shafts of word and thought, such as are described by the Lord: 'You brood of vipers, how can you speak good things when you are evil?'⁸

(56) 'And the serpent said to the woman: Did God say, you shall not eat of any tree of the garden? The woman answered the serpent: Of the fruit of any tree in the garden

⁵ Eph. 6.12.

⁶ 1 Cor. 9.26.

⁷ 2 Tim. 4.8.

⁸ Matt. 12.34.

we shall eat, but of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, you shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.⁹ Although you are aware that the serpent is wiser than all creatures, his cunning is especially noticeable here. As he sets his snares, he pretends to give utterance to the words of God, for God had already said: 'From every tree of the garden you may eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat, for the day you eat of it you must die.'¹⁰ The serpent inserted a falsehood in questioning the woman thus: 'Did God say, you shall not eat of any tree?' Whereas God had actually said: 'From every tree of the garden you may eat, but from one tree you must not eat,' meaning, by that, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was not to be tasted. We need not wonder at the manner of deception. Deceit accompanies any effort at ensnaring an individual. The serpent's question was not without its purpose. But the woman's reply will indicate that there was nothing questionable in the command of God: 'Of the fruit of all the trees in the garden we may eat, but of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, you shall not eat of it neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' There was nothing inexact about the command itself. The error lay in the report of the command. The Scriptural passage under discussion is self-explanatory. We realize that we ought not to make any addition to a command even by way of instruction. Any addition or qualification of a command is in the nature of a falsification. The simple, original form of a command should be preserved or the facts should be duly set before us. It frequently happens that a witness adds something of himself to a relation of facts. In this way, by the injection of an untruth, confidence in his testimony is wholly shattered.

⁹ Gen. 3.1.

¹⁰ Gen. 2.16.

No addition therefore—not even a good one—is called for. What is, therefore, at first sight objectionable in the addition made by the woman: ‘Neither shall you touch anything of it’? God did not say this, but, rather: ‘you must not eat.’ Still, we have here something which leads to error. There are two possibilities to the addition she made: Either it is superfluous or because of this personal contribution she has made God’s command only partly intelligible. John in his writings has made this clear: ‘If anyone shall add to them, God will add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone shall take away from these words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his portion from the tree of life.’¹¹ If this is true in this case, how much truer is it that nothing should be taken away from the commands laid down by God! From this springs the primary violation of the command. And many believe that this was Adam’s fault—not the woman’s. They reason that Adam in his desire to make her more cautious had said to the woman that God had given the additional instruction: ‘Neither shall you touch it.’ We know that it was not Eve, but Adam, who received the command from God, because the woman had not yet been created. Scripture does not reveal the exact words that Adam used when he disclosed to her the nature and content of the command. At all events, we understand that the substance of the command was given to the woman by the man. What opinions others have offered on this subject should be taken into consideration. It seems to me, however, that the initial violation and deceit was due to the woman. Although there may appear to be an element of uncertainty in deciding which of the two was guilty, we can discern the sex which was liable first to do wrong. Add to this the fact that she stands convicted in court whose previous error is afterward revealed. The woman is respon-

¹¹ Apoc. 22.18,19.

sible for the man's error and not vice-versa. Hence Paul says: 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and was in sin.'¹²

(57) Now let us examine another question relative to the addition which was made to the command. Does this addition in itself seem to be objectionable? If the words, 'neither shall you touch it,' are actually advantageous and tend to put one on his guard, why did not God expressly forbid this even to the point of seemingly permitting it by not forbidding it? Wherefore, both points must be examined; namely, the reasons why He neither permitted it nor forbade it. Some raise the question: Why did He not order that the object which He had made should be seen and touched? But, when you realize that there was in that tree the knowledge of good and evil, you can understand that He did not wish you to touch what is evil. Sufficient is it for us, using the words of the Lord, 'to watch Satan fall as lightning from heaven,'¹³ and giving to his sons not the meat of life, but that of night and darkness, as it is written: 'He gave him to be meat for the people of the Ethiopians.'¹⁴ Thus far on the subject of the reason why He did not command the tree to be touched. Here are the reasons, as I understand them, why God did not prohibit this act. There are many things which do us harm, if we make up our minds to touch them before we know what they are. We often learn, in fact, by experience to be resigned if we know beforehand that a certain food or drink is bitter. You learn to be tolerant if you believe that what is bitter is beneficial, lest your sudden realization of its bitterness may offend you and cause you to reject what may prove to be salutary. It is advantageous, therefore, first to have knowledge of this bitter quality, so

¹² 1 Tim. 2.14.

¹³ Luke 10.18.

¹⁴ Ps. 73.14.

that you may not be squeamish and that you may realize what is good for you. These are examples of what may harm us just to a slight degree. From the discussion which now follows, take warning of what may cause us more serious damage unless we make provision against it.

(58) Take the case of the Gentile who is eager for the faith. He becomes a catechumen and desires a greater fullness of doctrine to strengthen his faith. See to it that in his willingness to learn he is not exposed to false doctrine. Take care that he does not learn from Photinus or from Arius or from Sabellius. See that he does not hand himself over to teachers of this sort who would attract him by their airs of authority, so that his untrained mind, impressed by the weight of such august prestige, will be unable to discriminate the right from the wrong. He should first, therefore, determine with the eyes of his mind what are the logical sequences. Let him note where life exists by touching the life-giving qualities of holy Scripture, so that no interpreter will stand in his way. Sabellius reads for him: 'I am in the Father and the Father in me,'¹⁵ and says that means one Person. Photinus reads that 'there is one Mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus.' And elsewhere: 'Why do you wish to kill me, a man?'¹⁶ Arius, too, read the following: 'For the Father is greater than I.'¹⁷ The reading is clear, but the catechumen first ought to reflect on the matter in his own mind, so as to discover the real meaning of these passages. He is influenced by the prestige of his teachers. It would have been more to his advantage if he had not investigated at all rather than have come upon such an instructor. But the Gentile, too, if he takes up the Scriptures, reads: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' Again: 'If

¹⁵ John 14.10.

¹⁶ 1 Tim. 2.5; John 8.40.

¹⁷ John 14.28.

thy right hand is an occasion of sin to thee, cut it off.¹⁸ He does not understand the sense of this. He is not aware of the secret meaning of the divine words. He is worse off than if he had not read at all. Hence he has furnished a lesson to these men on how they should have investigated the meaning of the Word of God. A careful, not a superficial, examination of the context of the passage should be made. It is written: 'What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have investigated: of the Word of Life. And we have seen and now testify and announce to you.'¹⁹ You see how he investigated, so to speak, with his hands the Word of God and afterward announced it. Hence, the Word would not perhaps have caused injury to Adam and Eve if they had first touched and handled it, as it were, with the hands of the mind. Those who are infirm can by careful examination and handling investigate the nature of each and every object which they do not understand. Certainly, those weak first parents of ours should have studied beforehand the problem presented to them: How were they to touch the tree in which they knew there was knowledge of evil? The knowledge of evil, in fact, can frequently be of advantage to us. Wherefore we read in the oracular words of Scripture of the wiles of the Devil, so that we learn how we can escape his arts. We should be aware of his temptations, not that we may follow his lead, but that by instruction we may avoid these pitfalls.

(59) At this point there are some who doubt whether God meant that the fruit of every tree should be eaten—this injunction to include every tree, inclusive of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—or whether, in fact, He referred to every tree, but excluded only the tree of knowledge of

¹⁸ Lev. 24.20; Matt. 5.30.

¹⁹ John 1.1,2.

good and evil? These people are of the opinion that this matter is not without significance, because, although the fruit of this tree is harmful in itself, still, if it were combined with that of the other trees, it could not be injurious. They cite as example of this fact the belief that an antidote can be obtained from the body of a serpent which, being poisonous since it is extracted from a serpent, is harmful when taken alone, but when mixed with other drugs has medicinal properties. The knowledge of good and evil, also, if one possesses wisdom that is ever an aid toward survival and if one reaches out after the other types of virtue, is considered to be of no inconsiderable value. On that account, therefore, many hold that we can even understand the reason why God made this prohibition. He did not wish that tree of the knowledge of good and evil should be eaten alone and not in combination with the fruit of the others. He did not prohibit this if the other trees are taken into consideration at the same time. Wherefore what God said to Adam is cited: 'Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, of the tree which alone I commanded you not to eat.'²⁰ This would seem to offer an occasion for disputation. In the preceding passage the woman might well have not made any reply to the serpent's question: 'Did God say, you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?' But she answered: 'Of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, you shall not eat of it.' In this incident, as she was on the point of sinning, the woman's faith may appear to have been weak. Moreover, I shall not despoil Adam of all the virtues, so that he would appear to have attained no virtue in Paradise and would seem to have eaten nothing from the other trees, but had fallen into sin before he had obtained any fruit. I shall, therefore, not despoil Adam lest I may despoil the whole human race, which is innocent before it acquires the

²⁰ Gen. 3.11.

capacity to know good and evil. Not without reason was it said: 'Unless you turn and become like this child, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'²¹ The child, when he is scolded, does not retaliate. When he is struck, he does not strike back. He is not conscious of the allurements of ambition and self-seeking.

(60) The truth seems to be, then, that He commanded the tree not to be eaten, not even along with the fruit of the other trees. Knowledge of good, in fact, although of no use to a perfect man, is, on the other hand, of no value to a man who is imperfect. Paul speaks of himself as imperfect: 'Not that I have already obtained this or already have been made perfect, but I press on hoping that I may lay hold of it already.'²² Hence the Lord says to the imperfect: 'Do not judge that you may not be judged.'²³ Knowledge is, therefore, of no use to the imperfect. Hence we read: 'I did not know sin unless the Law had said, thou shalt not lust.' And further on we read: 'For without the Law sin is dead.'²⁴ What advantage is it to me to know what I cannot avoid? What avails it for me to know that the law of my flesh assails me? Paul is assailed and sees 'the law of his flesh warring against that of his mind and making him prisoner to the law of sin.' He does not rely on himself, but by the grace of Christ is confident of his 'deliverance from the body of death.'²⁵ Do you think that anyone with knowledge of sin can avoid it? Paul says: 'For I do not the good that I wish, but the evil that I do not wish.'²⁶ Do you consider that this knowledge which adds to the reproach of sin can be of help to man? Granted, however, that the perfect man

²¹ Matt. 18.3.

²² Phil. 3.12.

²³ Matt. 7.1.

²⁴ Rom. 7.7,8.

²⁵ Rom. 7.23,24.

²⁶ Rom. 7.19.

is unable to sin. God foresaw all men in the person of Adam. Hence it was not fitting that the human race in general should have a knowledge of good and evil—a knowledge which he could not utilize because of the weakness of the flesh.

Chapter 13

(61) Let us learn, therefore, that the temptations of the Devil are full of guile. Of the things that he promised, scarcely one of them seems to be true. He contrived falsehoods, as we can see if we read elsewhere: 'And the serpent said to the woman, you shall not die.' Here we have one falsehood, for man, who followed the promises of the serpent, is subject to death. Hence he added: 'For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened.' This alone is true, because further on we read: 'They both ate and their eyes were opened.'¹ But the truth is that as a result of this act harm followed. Hence, opening one's eyes is not to everyone's advantage, for it is written: 'They will see and will not see.'² But the serpent was quick to attack a falsehood to his statement, when he said: 'And you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.'³ Hence you may note that the serpent is the author of idolatry, for his cunning seems to be responsible for man's error in introducing many gods. His deceit lay in stating that they will be like gods, for not only have men ceased to be like gods, but even those men who were like gods (to whom it was spoken, 'I have said you are gods'⁴) have fallen from His favor.

(62) 'And the woman saw that the tree was good for

¹ Gen. 3.4-6.

² Isa. 6.9.

³ Gen. 3.5.

⁴ Ps. 81.6.

food, pleasing to the eyes and beautiful to gaze upon.⁵ She showed her weakness in passing judgment on what she had not tasted. It is not easy under any circumstance to make such an assumption without deep reflection and a careful examination of the facts. 'She took of its fruit,' we are told, 'and ate it and also gave some to her husband and they both ate.'⁶ Omission is made, and rightly so, of the deception of Adam, since he fell by his wife's fault and not because of his own.

(63) 'And their eyes were opened,' we are told, 'and they realized that they were naked.'⁷ They were naked, it is true, before this time, but they were not devoid of the garments of virtue. They were naked because of the purity of their character and because nature knows nothing of the cincture of deceit. Now, on the other hand, the mind of man is veiled in many folds of deception. When, therefore, they saw that they had been despoiled of the purity and simplicity of their untainted nature, they began to look for objects made by the hand of man wherewith to cover the nakedness of their minds and hearts. They added gratification so as to increase the idle pleasures of this world, sewing, as it were, leaf upon leaf in order to conceal and cover the organ of generation. But how explain the fact that Adam had his bodily eyes closed, whereas he was able to see all living creatures and confer names upon them? Well, just as by way of an inner and deeper knowledge they were able to realize, not that they were without garments, but that the protective covering of virtue was no longer theirs.

(64) 'So they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves coverings.'⁸ We are taught by the content of holy

⁵ Gen. 3.6.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Gen. 3.7.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Scripture how we should interpret the meaning of the word 'fig' in this passage. Scripture relates that the saints are those who find rest beneath the vine and the fig.⁹ Solomon has said: 'Who plants the fig tree and does not eat the fruit thereof?'¹⁰ Yet the owner may come to the fig tree and may be offended by finding there merely leaves and no fruit. I have information from Adam himself, in fact, about the significance of the leaves. He proceeded to make a covering for himself out of the leaves of the fig tree after he had sinned, whereas he should have had its fruit instead. The just man chooses the fruit; the sinner, the leaves. What is the fruit? We read: 'The fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, modesty, continency, love.'¹¹ He who possessed no fruit possessed no joy. The person who violated the command of God did not have faith, and he who ate of the forbidden tree did not have the virtue of continency.

(65) Whoever, therefore, violates the command of God has become naked and despoiled, a reproach to himself. He wants to cover himself and hide his genitals with fig leaves, making use, as it were of empty and idle talk which the sinner interweaves word after word with fallacies for the purpose of shielding himself from his awareness of his guilty deed. Desiring to conceal his fault, he throws leaves over himself, at the same time indicating that the Devil is responsible for his crime. He offers allurements of the flesh or the recommendations of another individual as excuses for his wrongdoing. He frequently produces examples from holy Scripture, citing them as instances of how a just man may fall into sin, the sin of adultery: 'And Abraham lay with his handmaid and David loved a strange woman whom

⁹ Mich. 4.4.

¹⁰ Prov. 27.18.

¹¹ Gal. 5.22.

he made his wife.¹² He patches together examples for his purposes from the list of prophetic books of Scripture. He sees the leaves and ignores the fruit.

(66) Do not the Jews seem to you to be patchers of leaves when they interpret in a material manner the words of the spiritual Law? Their interpretation, condemned to eternal aridity, loses all the characteristic greenness of the fruit. There is a correct interpretation, therefore, which points to a fruitful and spiritual fig tree beneath which just men and saints find their rest.¹³ Whoever plants this tree in the souls of every man will eat the fruit thereof, as Paul says: 'I have planted, Apollos watered.'¹⁴ But the wrong interpretation will not confer the fruit nor conserve its viridity.

(67) It was a serious matter, therefore, when, following this interpretation, Adam girded himself in that place where it would have been better that he had girded himself with the fruit of chastity. Seeds of generation are said to exist in our loins around which we bind our garments. Hence, Adam did wrong on that occasion when he girded himself with leaves that have no utility, inasmuch as by this act he implied, not the fruit of a future generation, but certain sins which remained until the coming of our Lord and Saviour. But, when the master came, He found the fig tree uncultivated. Elsewhere, when requested that he should order it to be cut down, the owner of the fig tree allowed it to be cultivated.¹⁵ And so we gird ourselves, not with leaves, but with the divine Word, as the Lord Himself says: 'Let your loins be girt about and your lamps burning.'¹⁶ Where-

¹² Gen. 16.13; 2 Kings 11.4.

¹³ Mich. 4.4.

¹⁴ 1 Cor. 3.6.

¹⁵ Cf. Matt. 21.19; Luke 13.6-9.

¹⁶ Luke 12.35.

fore He prohibits us to carry money even in our girdles.¹⁷ Our girdles ought not to store up worldly objects, but things of eternal nature.

Chapter 14

(68) 'And they heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden towards evening.'¹ What does 'walking' mean in reference to God, who is everywhere? In my opinion God may be said to walk wherever throughout Scripture the presence of God is implied, when we hear that He sees all things and 'the eyes of the Lord are upon the just.'² We read, too, that Jesus knew their thoughts and we read: 'Why do you harbor evil thoughts in your hearts?'³ When we reflect, therefore, on these statements, we have a knowledge of God in the act of walking. The sinner, in fact, had tried to hide away from the sight of God. He wished to conceal himself in his thoughts and was unwilling that his works appear in the light of day.⁴ The just man saw Him face to face,⁵ because the mind of the just man is in the presence of God and even converses with Him, as it is written: 'Judge for the fatherless and defend the widow, said the Lord.'⁶ When a sinner, therefore, reads these passages from Scripture, he hears the voice of God walking towards evening, so to speak. What does the phrase 'towards evening' mean? Does it not mean that the sinner realizes his sin too late and that the shame which should have for-

¹⁷ Cf. Matt. 10.9.

¹ Gen. 3.8.

² Ps. 33.16.

³ Luke 6.8; Matt. 9.4.

⁴ Matt. 5.16.

⁵ Deut.. 34.10; 1 Cor. 13.12.

⁶ Isa. 1.17,18.

stalled the fault before it occurred was itself too late? While the sinner is physically overcome by passions that affect the soul, he in his errant fashion does not heed, that is to say, does not hear, God, as He in holy Scripture walks in the hearts and minds of each and every one of us. God says: 'For I will dwell in their midst and I will walk among them and will be their God.'⁷ Therefore, the dread of divine power returns to the soul when we are eager to hide ourselves. Then, placed as we are by the thought of our sins in the midst of the trees of Paradise where we committed sin, we are discovered to be desirous of concealing ourselves and to be thinking of hidden things which God does not demand of us. But He who is 'the discerner of our thoughts and intentions of our hearts, extending to the division of soul and spirit,' says: 'Adam, where are you?'⁸

(69) How does God speak? Is it with the voice of the body? Not at all. He utters oracular words with a voice that is far more significant than is the voice of the body. The prophets heard this voice. It is heard by the faithful, but the wicked do not comprehend it. Wherefore we find the Evangelist in the Gospel listening to the voice of the Father speaking: 'I have glorified it and will glorify it again.' But the Jews did not listen. Hence they said: 'I had thundered.'⁹ We have given an instance above wherein God was thought to be walking when He was not. Here is an occasion when He was heard speaking, whereas to some people He spoke not.

(70) But let us take note of what He speaks: 'Adam, where, are you?' Even now these words have the healing power of salvation for those who hear the Word of God. Hence it is that the Jews who closed their eyes lest they hear do not deserve to hear even today. It follows that those who

⁷ Lev. 26.12

⁸ Heb. 4.12; Gen. 3.9.

⁹ John 12.28,29.

conceal themselves have a remedy, for he who hides himself is ashamed and he who is ashamed is converted, as it is written: 'Let them be much troubled and let them all be turned back speedily.'¹⁰ The very fact of His calling a person is a testimony of salvation to him who comes, because the Lord calls those for whom He feels pity. When He says, therefore, 'where are you?' it is not a question of a locality to one who knows what is hidden. God did not have His eyes closed, so that a man in hiding was able to escape His notice. For that reason He said: 'Adam has become like one of us,'¹¹ because his eyes were opened. He, in fact, opened his eyes, so that he saw his own sin which he was unable to avoid. It happens that after we have sinned, we become, somehow or other, more aware of our crimes. We are then aware of the sin which we did not consider to be such before we actually fell into sin. Certainly we did not then believe that a sin was subject to our disapproval, for, if we had felt guilty, we would not have committed it. God sees the faults of all men and knows their offenses. His eyes penetrate into the secrets of the souls of each and every one of us. What, then, does He mean by 'Adam, where are you?' Does He not mean 'in what circumstances' are you; not, 'in what place'? It is, therefore, not a question, but a reproof. From what condition of goodness, beatitude, and grace, He means to say, have you fallen into this state of misery? You have forsaken eternal life. You have entombed yourself in the ways of sin and death. Where is that noble confidence and trust of yours? That fear that you show is evidence of your wrongdoing and that hiding place of yours betrays your dereliction. 'Where are you?' does not mean 'in what place,' but 'in what condition.' Where have your sins led you, so that you fled the God whom before you sought

¹⁰ Ps. 6.11.

¹¹ Gen. 3.22.

after? Perhaps you are disturbed by the fact that Adam is the first to be rebuked, although the woman was the first to eat the fruit. But the weaker sex begins by an act of disobedience, whereas the stronger sex is more liable to feelings of shame and forgiveness. The female furnished the occasion for wrongdoing; the male, the opportunity to feel ashamed.

(71) And the woman said: 'The serpent deceived me and I ate.'¹² That fault is pardonable which is followed by an admission of guilt. The woman, therefore, is not to be despaired of, who did not keep silent before God, but who preferred to admit her sin—the woman on whom was passed a sentence that was salutary. It is good to suffer condemnation for our sins and to be scourged for our crimes, provided we are scourged along with other men. Hence, Cain, because he wanted to deny his guilt, was judged unworthy to be punished in his sin. He was forgiven without a prescribed penalty, not, perhaps, for having committed such a serious crime as parricide—he was responsible for his brother's death—as one of sacrilege, in that he thought he had deceived God when he said: 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'¹³ And so the accusation is reserved for his accuser, the Devil, prescribing that he be scourged along with his angels, since he did not wish to be scourged with men. Of such, therefore, has it been said: 'There is no regard for their death and they shall not be scourged like other men.'¹⁴ The woman's case is, accordingly, of a different character. Although she incurred the sin of disobedience, she still possessed in the tree of Paradise food for virtue. And so she admitted her sin and was considered worthy of pardon. 'The just is first accuser of himself in the

¹² Gen. 3.13.

¹³ Gen. 4.9.

¹⁴ Ps. 72.4,5.

beginning of his speech.¹⁵ No one can be justified from sin unless he has first made confession of his sin. Wherefore the Lord says: 'Tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself.'¹⁶

(72) Because Eve has admitted her crime, she is given a milder and more salutary sentence, which condemned her wrong-doing and did not refuse pardon.¹⁷ She was to serve under her husband's power, first, that she might not be inclined to do wrong, and, secondly, that, being in a position subject to a stronger vessel, she might not dishonor her husband, but on the contrary, might be governed by his counsel.¹⁸ I see clearly here the mystery of Christ and His Church. The Church's turning toward Christ in times to come and a religious servitude submissive to the Word of God—these are conditions far better than the liberty of this world. Hence it is written: 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and shall serve him only.'¹⁹ Servitude, therefore, of this sort is a gift of God. Wherefore, compliance with this servitude is to be reckoned among blessings. We have the example of Isaac granting it as a blessing to his son Esau that he should serve his brothers. Hence he asked for his father's blessing. Although he knew that one blessing had been taken from him, he asked for another: 'Have you only one blessing, father?'²⁰ By this servitude, therefore, Esau, who had before he sold birthright to satisfy his appetite and who in his zeal for hunting in the field had not the benefits derived from a blessing,²¹ had now come to believe that he would fare better in the future if he would pay reverence to his brother as a type of Christ. By this kind of

¹⁵ Prov. 18.17.

¹⁶ Isa. 43.26.

¹⁷ Cf. Gen. 3.16.

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Peter 3.7.

¹⁹ Deut. 6.13; Luke 4.8.

²⁰ Cf. Gen. 27.40,38.

²¹ Cf. Gen. 25.27.

servitude Christian folk grow strong, as we have it expressed in the words of the Lord to His disciples: 'Whoever wishes to be first among you, let him be the slave of all of you.'²² Hence charity, which is greater than hope and faith, brings this servitude to pass, for it is written: 'By charity serve one another.'²³ This, then, is the mystery mentioned by the Apostle in reference to Christ and the Church.²⁴ The servitude existed formerly, in fact, but in a condition of disobedience which was to be later made salutary by the generation of children 'in faith and love and holiness with modesty.'²⁵ What was certainly among the fathers a generation brought into existence in sin shall become salutary in the children, so that what was a stumbling block to the Jews shall in the society of Christians undergo improvement.

Chapter 15

(73) 'The serpent urged me,' she said. This seemed to God to be pardonable, inasmuch as He knew that the serpent found numerous ways to deceive people. 'Satan disguises himself as an angel of light' and 'his ministers as ministers of justice,'¹ imposing false names on individual things, so as to call 'rashness' a virtue and avarice 'industry.' The serpent, in fact, deceived the woman and the woman led the man away from truth to a violation of duty. The serpent is a type of the pleasures of the body. The woman stands for our senses and the man, for our minds. Pleasure stirs the senses, which, in turn, have their effect on the mind. Pleasure,

²² Matt. 20.27.

²³ Gal. 5.13.

²⁴ Cf. Eph. 5.32.

²⁵ 1 Tim. 2.15.

1 2 Cor. 11.14,15.

therefore, is the primary source of sin. For this reason, do not wonder at the fact that by God's judgment the serpent was first condemned, then the woman, and finally the man. The order of condemnation, too, corresponded to that of the crimes committed, for pleasure usually captivates the senses and the senses, the mind. To convince you that the serpent is the type of pleasure, take note of his condemnation.

(74) 'On your breast and on your belly shall you crawl,' we read. Only those who live for the pleasures of the stomach can be said to walk on their bellies, 'whose god is their belly and their glory is their shame,'² who eat of what is earthy, and who, weighed down with food, are bent over towards what is of earth. The serpent is well called the symbol of pleasure in that, intent on food, he seems to feed on the earth: 'On your breast and on your belly shall you crawl, dust shall you eat all the days of your life.'³ We should not tolerate any of the excuses the Devil may make. By so doing we may, perchance, offer him an occasion to display his wickedness. We do this when we say that his iniquity resulted from his condemnation and hence that he aimed constantly to injure mankind because he was condemned for the very purpose of doing us harm. This seems to be pretty fanciful. If we regard the sentence passed on him to be in the nature of a condemnation, God did not condemn the serpent in order to cause injury to man. He pointed out what was to happen in the future. Furthermore, we have demonstrated above how that temptation can be of great service to mankind. What we are to expect can in some measure be gathered from our knowledge of what has been written: 'Whoever shall glorify me, him will I glorify and he that despises me shall be despised.'⁴ God brings to pass

² Phil. 3.19.

³ Gen. 3.14.

⁴ 1 Kings 2.30.

what is good, not what is evil, as His words can teach you that He confers glory and disregards punishment. 'Who-soever shall glorify me,' He says, 'him will I glorify,' thus declaring that the glory of the good is the purpose of His work. And concerning 'him that despises me,' He did not say I shall deprive of glory, but that he shall be deprived of glory. He did not avow that injury to them would be the result of His action, but pointed out what was to come. He did not say, therefore, I shall make you crawl on your breast and belly and feed on earth all the days of your life. What He actually said was: 'You shall crawl and you shall eat,' in this way showing that He predicted what the serpent would do in the future rather than prescribe what he was to do. The earth, not the soul, He said, is your food, and this, in fact, can be of profit to sinners. Hence the Apostle 'delivered such a one for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.'⁵ He says that the serpent crawls on his breast and belly. This is due not so much to the shape of his body as to the fact that he has fallen from celestial happiness because of his thoughts of earth. The breast, in fact, is frequently referred to as the seat of wisdom. And so the Apostle leans his head, not on the ground, but on Christ's breast.⁶ If, therefore, the wisdom of the Devil is compared to that of the most cruel of animals whose breast is between its legs, if men, too, who, 'minding the things of the earth'⁷ and without the inner urge to rise towards heaven, have the appearance of crawling on their bellies—then we surely ought to fill the belly of our souls with the Word of God rather than with the corruptible things of this world. Fittingly, therefore, does David, assuming the character of Adam, say: 'My soul is humbled down to

⁵ 1 Cor. 5.5.

⁶ Cf. John 13.25; 21.20.

⁷ Phil. 3.20.

the dust, my belly cleaveth to the earth.'⁸ He used the word 'cleaveth' in reference to the serpent who feeds on earthly iniquities. Thus the Apostle says that we should take on the pattern of Christ, so that the virtue of Christ may extend to you.⁹ The sentence imposed on the serpent is not considered a heavy one, since even Adam, whose offense was less serious, was accorded a like sentence.

(75) For it is written: 'Cursed is the earth in thy works; in sadness shall you eat thereof all the days of your life.' The two sentences seem to have a certain similarity, yet in that similarity there is a great difference. There is a difference in the way a person eats of the earth, as the serpent is related to have done and the manner in which this is recorded of the man: 'In sadness shall you eat.' That very phrase 'in sadness' makes the precise difference. Note how important this difference is. It is for my benefit that I should eat the earth in sadness rather than with delight, that is to say, that I should appear to feel a certain sadness in my bodily acts and senses rather than experience pleasure in sin. Many, in fact, because of their manifold iniquities have no awareness of sin. But he who says: 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection,'¹⁰ feels sadness because of regret for the sins to which we are subject. He himself did not have such serious faults for which he ought to feel sorrow. Hence he teaches us that that kind of sorrow is of value which has, not this world, but God, as its end. It is right, he says, that you become sorrowful, so as to feel repentance in the face of God: 'For the sorrow that is according to God produces salvation, whereas the sorrow that is according to the world produces death.'¹¹ Take note of those who in

8 Ps. 43.25.

9 Phil. 3.17.

10 1 Cor. 9.27.

11 2 Cor. 7.9,10.

the Old Testament were sorrowful in the midst of their bodily labors and who attained grace, while those who found delight in such pleasures continued to be punished. Hence the Hebrews, who groaned in the works of Egypt,¹² attained the grace of the just and those 'who ate bread with mourning and fear,' were supplied with spiritual good.¹³ The Egyptians, on the other hand, who, in their service to a detestable king, carried out such works with joy, received no favor.¹⁴

(76) There, too, is that distinction between the serpent who is said to eat the earth and Adam, to whom God said: 'You shall eat in sadness the herbs of the field.'¹⁵ We may note here a certain gradation. When we eat the earth, it seems that we are in a sort of warfare. When we eat the herbs, there is a certain advance. When finally, we eat bread, then our life of trial has reached its terminus. Let us experience a series of advancements in this life as Paul did: 'It is now no longer I that live,'¹⁶ that is, not I who before this ate the earth, not I who ate grass, for 'all flesh is grass,'¹⁷ but 'Christ lives in me.'¹⁸ This signifies that living bread which comes from heaven,¹⁹ and that wisdom, too, is living, together with grace, justice, and resurrection.

(77) Again, consider the fact that it is the serpent and not man who is cursed. And the earth is not cursed in itself but is 'cursed in your work.'²⁰ This is said in reference to the soul. The earth is cursed if your works are earthly, that is, of this world. It is not cursed as a whole. It will merely bring forth thorns and thistles, if it is not diligently cared

12 Cf. Exod. 2.23.

13 Tob. 2.5; cf. 1 Cor. 10.3.

14 Exod. 16.14-18.

15 Gen. 3.18.

16 Gal. 2.20.

17 Isa. 40.6.

18 Gal. 2.20.

19 John 6.50.

20 Gen. 3.17.

for by the labor of human hands. If we do not toil over it in labor and sweat we shall not eat bread. The law of the flesh wars against the law of the mind.²¹ We must labor and sweat so as to chastise the body and bring it into subjection and sow the seeds of spiritual things. If we sow what is carnal, we shall reap fruit that is carnal. If, however, we sow what is spiritual, we shall reap the fruit of the spirit.²²

²¹ Cf. Rom. 7.23.

²² Cf. 1 Cor. 9.27,11,12.